

## Teacher Quality Standard III

**Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction and create an environment that facilitates learning for their students.**

Study after study shows the single most important factor determining the quality of the education a child receives is the quality of the teacher. Quality teachers have knowledge of content, curriculum, and standards. They are able to plan and implement instructional strategies in an effective and purposeful manner that enhances student learning and independence. Research shows that when implemented effectively and purposefully, the professional practices referenced in Standard III can result in an environment in which all students can learn and succeed.

### Element E

**Teachers establish and communicate high expectations for all students and plan instruction that helps students develop critical-thinking and problem solving skills.**

*Whether you think you can or think you can't — you are right.  
—Henry Ford*

Professional practices referenced under each element of the Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers are cumulative. Therefore, for teachers to be proficient in application of the practices referenced under Element E, they must establish and communicate high expectations for all students that challenge students to learn to their greatest ability. Teachers must plan instruction that ensures students have opportunities to learn and apply critical-thinking and problem-solving skills which support them in meeting or exceeding performance expectations.

#### PROFICIENT RATING LEVEL

##### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: THE TEACHER:

- ***Challenges all students to learn to their greatest ability.***

Challenging all students requires setting high expectations for all students. Teachers must communicate that excellence is expected from all students, not just students who are viewed as high achievers or “gifted.” Teachers who communicate these expectations consistently:

- Plan instruction that addresses the academic needs and learning preferences of all students.  
*See also Standard III, Element A.*
- Create a classroom environment in which students feel safe taking risks.  
*See also Standard III, Element B.*
- Communicate that content is important and makes it meaningful for students – addresses the “why” for learning.
- Teach students that mistakes are part of the learning process and that effort is a key to success.
- Provide feedback on students’ progress and next steps.



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*See also Standard III, Element H.*

*See also Partially Proficient Professional Practice, Sets student expectations at a level that challenges students.*

- ***Teaches higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills.***

In order to explicitly teach **higher-order thinking** and **problem-solving skills** to their students, teachers must show them what thinking sounds like by sharing their thinking aloud. Teachers can tell students the importance of being curious or of reflecting, or even explicitly teach lessons focusing on thinking skills, but unless they share their thinking with students and make their thinking visible in authentic ways across the day and over time, it's unlikely students will become cognitively engaged and be able to "think about their thinking." Teachers who put their thinking on display are teachers who are present. When they are present, they are tuned into their thinking and responsive to what is going on in the classroom and their own expectations for student learning. They make their thinking visible to show students how to think and how to learn.

Higher-order thinking skills require students to respond to questions and/or tasks that go beyond simple recall of information. For teachers to explicitly teach higher-order thinking skills, they must be implementing instruction and modeling their thinking in a manner that is sequenced across Bloom's Taxonomy of intellectual thinking and behavior important to learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*See also Standard II, Element C.*

Impact on students from teaching higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills:

- Students can make connections to their world and to their learning.
- Students are led to think more deeply and independently.
- Students are led to take more ownership of their learning.
- Student motivation increases as they become more cognitively engaged in the learning process.
- Teachers are able to assess and provide feedback on students' learning and thinking.

It is important for teachers to recognize when students may need questions and tasks scaffolded based on Bloom's levels of thinking. Some students need to obtain the information and skills necessary to think across the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Many teachers make the mistake of beginning with evaluative or creative questions and tasks and then complain that their students can't meet expectations. This may be due to lack of scaffolding that supports students in building the knowledge and skills necessary to think at these levels.



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*Refer to this external resource for additional information and classroom ideas:*

- Website: Kathy Schrock’s IPADS4Teaching H.O.T.S for Bloom’s  
<http://www.ipads4teaching.net/hots-for-blooms.html>  
Website provides ideas for teaching higher-order thinking skills and incorporating technology in a manner that enhances student learning.

*Refer to these internal resources for additional information and classroom ideas:*

- Bloom’s Taxonomy Question Types  
Document lists the levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy with corresponding verbs for use in creating questions.
- What Does it Mean to Scaffold Questions and Tasks  
Document includes research on the importance of scaffolding questions and tasks. Examples aligned to social studies and reading learning objectives are provided.

Teachers who teach higher-order thinking skills also teach students how to generate questions that are clear, on topic, and enhance learning — a characteristic of a critical thinker. An indicator of a student’s level of mastery is evident in the types of questions asked. Teachers who model how to ask higher order questions stimulate student reflection and the need to know more.

Although students ask questions throughout the school day, research shows that the majority of questions are to seek clarification on procedural matters and not questions that further their learning. What teachers need to teach students is how to generate questions that prompt their thinking, provide purpose for their learning, and support them in thinking about their own meta-cognitive processes.

Teachers of younger students may find it necessary to teach question words as a prerequisite to students generating their own questions. The “I Wonder” strategy is a self-monitoring strategy to support students in understanding what they are thinking as they read and learn. It can be an effective tool to support younger students in stopping and thinking about questions they have while reading or learning new content.

*Refer to this internal resource for additional information:*

- Teaching Students to Ask Questions  
Document explains how teachers can engage students in asking questions.

*Refer to these internal resources for classroom ideas for teaching younger students how to ask questions:*

- Using Question Words with Younger Students  
Document provides definitions of question words for use with younger students that may also be used as visuals.



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- I Wonder Worksheet  
Document can be used for students to record their questions.
  - I Wonder Bookmark  
Document is a bookmark students may use to record their questions while reading.
- ***Ensures that students perform at levels meeting or exceeding expectations.***

Communicating high expectations and incorporating critical-thinking and problem-solving skills are the first steps to ensuring that students perform at levels exceeding expectations. However, to ensure all students are meeting the challenges and high expectations that have been established, teachers must continually implement strategies that hold students accountable for their learning, as well as assessing students' progress towards learning outcomes.

*See also Standard III, Element B and Element H and Basic Professional Practice, Holds students accountable for their learning.*



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